

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 EA-11 ADP-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-09 H-02 INR-10

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-15 USIA-12

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FM AMEMBASSY ROME

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8249

INFO AMEMBASSY SAIGON

USDEL JEC PARIS

S E C R E T ROME 2876

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR VT VS

SUBJECT: POPE PAUL MENTIONS ENCOUNTER WITH PRESIDENT THIEU

1. EARLY APR 11 ILLING CALLED MSGR. GASPARI, VATICAN DEPUTY FORMIN, TO ASK IF AT MASS GENERAL AUDIENCE LATER SAME MORNING POPE WOULD MENTION HIS MEETING WITH PRESIDENT THIEU. ILLING OBSERVED THAT SINCE POPE HAD ANNOUNCED WITH GREAT JOY AT FEB 14 AUDIENCE HIS MEETING WITH XUAN THUY, FOR HIM TO AVOID MENTIONING MEETING WITH THIEU AT THIS TIME WOULD LEND CREDENCE TO WHAT LOCAL MEDIA HAS LABELED "VATICAN DESIRE TO TAKE ITS DISTANCE FROM THIEU." GASPARI SAID HE DID NOT RPT NOT KNOW WHAT POPE INTENDED TO SAY, BUT HE TELEPHONED BACK IN HALF- HOUR TO SAY HE HAD JUST READ TEXT OF POPE'S PLANNED ADDRESS AND THAT IT DEALT EXCLUSIVELY WITH TENTH ANNIVERSARY OF POPE JOHN'S ENCYCLICAL " PACEM IN TERRIS," WITH NO MENTION OF THIEU ENCOUNTER.

2. ILLING CHECKED WITH VATICAN PRESS OFFICE AT 1300 AND SECRETARY INFORMED HIM THAT POPE HAD DEPARTED FROM PREPARED TEXT AND MADE SURPRISE REFERENCE TO MEETING WITH THIEU, NOT RPT NOT MENTIONING HIM BY NAME BUT LEAVING NO DOUBT ABOUT WHOM HE REFERRED TO.

3. ACCORDING TO ITALIAN WIRE SERVICE ANSA POPE SAID, " WE HAVE
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JUST SPOKEN IN THESE DAYS TO A CHIEF OF STATE WHO MADE THIS OBSERVATION, ' THE PEACE IS FRAGILE, JUST BECAUSE IT DOES NOT HAVE SUPPORT OF ALL PUBLIC OPINION NEITHER IN ITS OWN OR IN NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES.' " IT MUST BE STRENGTHENED," ADDED POPE, SPEAKING EXTEMPOURANEOUSLY, " SO THAT IT CAN BE ROOTED IN THE CONSCIENCE OF THE PEOPLE. TO MAKE THE PEACE STRONGER, A COLLECTIVE DETERMINATION AND THE HELP OF GOD IS NECESSARY."

4. COMMENT: IMPOSSIBLE DETERMINE WHETHER OUR TIMELY CALL PROMPTED POPE'S REMARKS, BUT SINCE GASPARI, WHO IN OFFICE WHICH WOULD NORMALLY PREPARE ANY SUCH POLITICAL ANNOUNCEMENTS, UNAWARE POPE'S INTENTION, WE MAY BE RESPONSIBLE. VOLPE

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*** Current Classification *** SECRET

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